

one of the most restrictive photo ID laws in the nation. Under this pernicious voter ID law, only a handful of photo IDs can be used at polling places.

When the State of Alabama started requiring a photo ID to vote, officials claimed it would reduce voter fraud. The reality is that voter fraud is rare—but the end results are that more than 250,000 Alabamians without a photo ID have been disenfranchised. Many of the disenfranchised are African-Americans, low-income individuals, senior citizens, and the disabled.

This past October, Alabama lawmakers decided to make this bad law even worse by reducing services at 34 DMVs across the state. Driver's licenses are the most popular form of ID used at the polls—and 8 out of the 10 counties in Alabama that are impacted have the highest percentage of black registered voters in the state. How is this not discriminatory?

I fully support the federal lawsuit filed by the Greater Birmingham Ministries and the Alabama NAACP, challenging the photo ID law in our state. I have repeatedly argued that Alabama's photo ID law is a renewed assault on voting rights.

I also applaud the U.S. Department of Transportation's decision to investigate the reduction of services at the 34 DMVs in question for a possible violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Alabama cannot balance its budget on the backs of those who can least afford it, nor infringe upon the civil rights of minorities by limiting access to the most popular form of identification used to vote.

Voting is at the heart of our democracy. It's our most fundamental right—and duty—as Americans. I am a proud Alabamian, so it disappoints me that for every two steps Alabama takes forward, we take one step back.

Voting should be made easier—not harder—so that no voices are excluded and that every citizen can cast their vote without any unnecessary or unwarranted barriers.

Alabama recently reached a settlement with the Department of Justice to settle claims that the state did not fully comply with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. An investigation by the Department of Justice found that Alabama had largely failed to provide opportunities for Alabamians to register to vote when they applied for or renewed a driver's license.

Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed a number of attempts—not just in Alabama—but across the country to restrict the vote. I stand before you today to urge Congress to restore the vote. Representatives LINDA SÁNCHEZ, JUDY CHU and I introduced the Voting Rights Advancement Act in June to stop the renewed assault on voting rights, and to restore preclearance for states like Alabama where new barriers to voting threaten to silence the most vulnerable voices in our electorate.

We cannot take for granted the battles endured by those who came before us, nor can we neglect our own responsibilities to ensure liberty and justice. The struggle continues, and each of us must do our part to further the cause of human and civil rights for all Americans.

We must restore the voices of the excluded—Congress must act today to restore the vote.

IMPACT OF THE ARTS ON STUDENTS AT SAVOY ELEMENTARY

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call attention to the remarkable impact of art on the educational performance of the students at Savoy Elementary, a public school in my district.

Savoy Elementary Anacostia, located here in the nation's capital, is one of eight pilot schools of Turnaround Arts, a signature program of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Turnaround Arts has had clear, life-changing impacts on the students of Savoy—attendance is up, discipline referrals are down, and the school has made double-digit gains in math and reading scores.

The Savoy Players are a performing group at Savoy Elementary. Led by Carol Foster, a legendary arts leader in the national capital region, this group has been hugely successful. To be part of this group, students must exhibit maturity, grit, excellent attendance, and good grades. The professionalism, spirit, and magnetism of this group has catapulted them into the limelight.

In addition to countless performances for their school community, they have had four performances at the White House, performed with Brian McKnight at the Warner Theater, and brought down the house at the Kennedy Center. But, most importantly, singing, dancing and performing has brought them the joy, meaning, and purpose that every child should experience.

Mr. Speaker, in this holiday season, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the clear benefit exposure to the arts has made for the children of Savoy Elementary, and hope that the new education legislation will bring similar opportunities to kids across the country.

INTRODUCTION OF THE AVONTE'S LAW ACT OF 2015

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill, the Avonte's Law Act of 2015, which was inspired by the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Avonte Oquendo of Queens, New York. Avonte was an autistic child who wandered away from his school. His lifeless body was not found for more than a month. "Wandering" is very common in children with autism and other disabilities, and sometimes children who wander are non-verbal or cannot communicate well with others, leading to dangerous interactions with strangers or even law enforcement.

This bill authorizes a new grant program within the United States Department of Justice to provide local law enforcement agencies with the resources to procure response tools and increase education and training for first responders, schools, and families with the goal of preventing situations like Avonte's from happening again.

The bill also requires the Attorney General to establish standards and best practices for the administration of any type of voluntary "tracking" system used by law enforcement agencies that are awarded these funds. Tracking devices are one of the many ways we can help prevent another tragic situation like Avonte's.

Mr. Speaker, by taking a holistic approach to this issue, we can help children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) live safe and happy lives all around the country.

TRIBUTE TO THE NODAWAY VALLEY BOYS CROSS COUNTRY TEAM

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Nodaway Valley High School Boys Cross Country team for winning the Iowa Class 1A State Cross Country Championship.

I would like to congratulate each member of the team:

Runners: Nathan Venteicher, Shane Breheny, Heath Downing, Brayten Funke, Dallas Kraeger, Skyler Rawlings, and Brycen Wallace;

Head Coach: Darrell Burmeister; and Assistant Coaches: Dave Swanson, Phyllis Eshelman, and Alyse Dreher.

Mr. Speaker, the success of this team and their coaches demonstrates the rewards of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. I am honored to represent them in the United States Congress. I ask that all of my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating the team for competing in this rigorous competition and wishing them all nothing but continued success.

LEGISLATION ALLOWING COMBAT VETERANS AN EXTENDED TIME TO FILE FOR REFUND

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation that will allow members of our military services to file their taxes long after they were due in order to provide an adequate window to claim refunds or credits that may have been owed.

It has come to my attention that some members of our armed forces, in their haste to rejoin civilian life, can occasionally let fall by the wayside tax returns—particularly those that may actually have a refund. While tax liability can follow a taxpayer forever—plus interest and penalties—taxpayers only have a couple years in which to claim a credit or a refund.

This legislation widens the opportunity for a veteran to look back, realize a missed opportunity, and remedy the situation. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this solution.